

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 0275

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GR
SUBJECT: PROMINENT ROYALIST CREATES STIR

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER
SPIRIDON THEOTOKIS, WIDELY CONSIDERED ONE OF THE MOST
ATTRACTIVE ROYALIST FIGURES IN CONTEMPORARY GREECE, RETURNED
TO THE HEADLINES LATE LAST WEEK AFTER A PERIOD OF RELATIVE
OBSCURITY SINCE HIS RESIGNATION IN DECEMBER 1974 AS A
DEPUTY OF THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY. A STORY APPEARING IN
SENSATIONALIST, LEFTIST ELEFTHERTYPIA RECOUNTED A
PURPORTED MEETING WHICH THEOTOKIS HAD EARLIER THE SAME
WEEK WITH SOME SEVENTEEN COLLEAGUES OF SIMILAR CONSERVATIVE
PERSUASION. ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE, THEOTOKIS STRONGLY
CONDEMNED THE GOG FOR ITS DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES,
WHILE HE VAGUELY HINTED AT THE FUTURE INSTITUTION OF A
MONARCHIST PARTY.

2. THE ELEFTHERTYPIA ACCOUNT DESCRIBED THEOTOKIS AS
HAVING ATTACKED THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT FOR ITS "TRAGIC
MISTAKE" OF LEAVING NATO. GREECE'S REAL ENEMY IS THE
BULGARIANS AND NOT THE TURKS, HE ALLEGEDLY SAID.
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FURTHERMORE, HE STRESSED, THE ONLY MANNER TO CONFRONT THE
"TURKISH PROBLEM" WOULD BE FOR GREECE TO REMAIN WITHIN THE
NATO FOLD RATHER THAN MOVE TO THE OUTSIDE WHERE GREECE
STANDS ALONE. ON RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., THEOTOKIS IS
QUOTED AS SAYING THAT GREECE BELONGS TO THE WEST, "AND WHEN
WE SAY THE WEST, WE MEAN CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.
WHICH IS IN FACT OUR FRIEND."

3. DOMESTICALLY, THEOTOKIS IS SAID TO HAVE TAKEN THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT TO TASK FOR ITS LAXNESS IN DEALING WITH WHAT HE LABELLED THE "POPULAR FRONT" WHICH HE SAID IS COMPOSED OF THOSE RANGING FROM THE EXTREME LEFT TO INCLUDE MANY IN THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY. THE "POPULAR FRONT," CONTINUED THEOTOKIS, NOW CONTROLS OVER EIGHTY PERCENT OF THE TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES AS A RESULT OF THE LAST MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. LIKEWISE THE GOG WAS BLAMED BY HIM FOR ALLOWING "THE POLYTECHNIC" COMMEMORATIONS TO BE TAKEN OVER BY THE "POPULAR FRONT" FOR COMMUNIST PURPOSES. THE STORY CLAIMED HE HAD LAMBASTED THE PRIME MINISTER PERSONALLY AS BEING A MAN "OF LIMITED EDUCATION AND POLITICALLY UNSUITED TO LEAD THE FORTUNES OF THE STATE." HE ALSO OPPOSED ATTEMPTS TO SUPPLANT KATHAREVOUSA AS A WORKING LANGUAGE, AND ALLEGEDLY MADE REMARKS CRITICAL OF THE ARMED FORCES DURING THE 1974 MOBILIZATION PERIOD.

4. FINALLY, THEOTOKIS WAS REPORTED TO HAVE SPOKEN ABOUT THE NEED TO REINSTILL ROYALIST IDEALS IN THE "BREASTS AND MINDS" OF THE EDUCATED GREEK POPULACE, DISCLAIMING THE NEED FOR SUPPORT FROM THE UNEDUCATED AND THE PEASANTS. HE WAS VAGUE, NEVERTHELESS, ON THE FUTURE SHAPE OF THE MOVEMENT, STATING THAT THE TIME WAS NOT YET RIPE TO REVEAL HIS INTENTIONS.

5. FOLLOWING THE APPEARANCE OF THE ELEFTHEROTYPIA STORY, MOST NEWSPAPERS SEIZED THE OCCASION TO GIVE PROMINENT ATTENTION TO THE SUBSTANCE OF THE ARTICLE. THIS SUDDEN
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PUBLICITY PROMPTED A REPLY FROM THEOTOKIS WHO CLAIMED HIS VIEWS IN SOME INSTANCES HAD BEEN MISCONSTRUED BY THE PRESS. DENYING HE REPRESENTED EX-KING CONSTANTINE AND AFFIRMING HIS ANTI-COMMUNIST STANCE, THE FORMER RANKING OFFICIAL CLARIFIED THAT HE DISAGREED WITH THE GOG OVER THE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE OF THE ABOLISHMENT OF THE MONARCHY. HE CHARGED FURTHER THAT THE DOMESTIC POLICY OF THE GOG SURRENDERED THE NATION TO THE CONTROL OF "DICTATORIAL COMMUNISM OR ITS FELLOW-TRAVELLERS." IN THE FOREIGN SECTOR, THEOTOKIS INDICATED HE WAS CRITICAL OF THE PRESENT POLICY WHICH TENDS TO ISOLATE GREECE FROM HER ALLIES TO THE ADVANTAGE OF TURKEY, AND THUS ADVOCATED GREECE'S PRESENCE IN NATO. NEVERTHELESS, HE LET STAND MUCH OF WHAT THE PRESS REPORTED AS HIS OPINIONS.

6. REFERRING TO THE THEOTOKIS STORY, AND AUTHORIZED GOG SPOKESMAN COMMENTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT CONCERNED "SINCE, IN A DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY, THE PEOPLE ARE FREE TO SAY ANYTHING THEY LIKE, EVEN ABSURDITIES." THE SPOKESMAN UNDERLINED,

HOWEVER, THAT "IT IS NOT TRUE THAT GREECE HAS LEFT THE ALLIANCE." FURTHERMORE, THE SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THEOTOKIS HAD NO RIGHT TO POSE NOW AS A CRITIC OF THE GOVERNMENT SINCE HE HAD BEEN ELECTED DEPUTY AS A MEMBER OF THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY AND WAS FULLY AWARE BEFOREHAND OF THE PARTY PROGRAMS. END UNCLASSIFIED.

7. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL: COMMENT: INTERESTING AS THEOTOKIS' DEBATE WITH THE PRESS MIGHT BE, THE TELLTALE IS THE SENSITIVITY OF THE GOG TO THIS OTHERWISE RELATIVELY INSIGNIFICANT EXCHANGE. IN THE HEYDAY OF CARAMANLIS' RETURN, THE DOWNFALL OF THE JUNTA AND THE RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY, 69 PERCENT OF THE GREEK VOTERS CAST THEIR BALLOTS AGAINST THE MONARCHY IN THE DECEMBER 1974 NATIONAL REFERENDUM. HOWEVER, ALMOST A THIRD OF THE VOTERS A WHAT TIME FAVORED THE RETENTION OF THE INSTITUTION, A FACTOR NOT EASILY IGNORED. WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME, THE PRO-ROYALIST SENTIMENT HAS PROBABLY
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GAINED SOMEWHAT--ALTHOUGH JUST HOW MUCH IS DIFFICULT TO GUAGE. CERTAINLY AT PRESENT CARAMANLIS NEED FEE NEITHER SERIOUS DEFECTIONS FROM HIS OWN NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY BY THOSE OF MONARCHICAL BENT NOR OPEN CHALLENGE FROM THOSE OUTSIDE. HOWEVER, WITH GREECE'S PAST HISTORY AS A GUIDE, THE POSSIBILITY OF THE RESTITUTION OF THE MONARCHY IN THE POST-CARAMANLIS ERA SHOULD NOT BE TOTALLY DISCARDED.
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